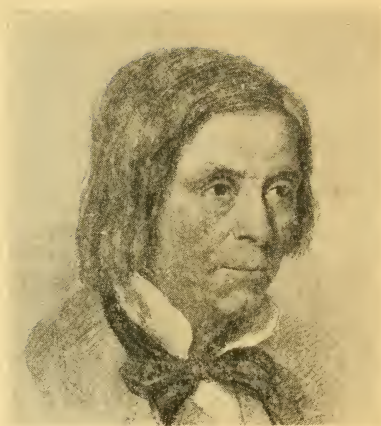


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Leigh Hunt's Robin Hood

With Manuscript Reproductions

Ballads of Robin Hood



LEIGH HUNT AT AGE 66

Ballads of Robin Hood

By LEIGH HUNT ✓

✓ With Some Manuscript Reproductions ✓



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A FOREWORD

Sorting out, a few evenings back, a large amount of Leigh Hunt manuscript acquired at auction, and endeavoring to place it in first editions of the author in my possession, I was delighted to find that I had several pages of a draft of some of the verses of his *Ballads of Robin Hood*.

These pages are reproduced in this reprint.

They are interesting, not only as specimens of the hand-writing of Hunt, but as showing some differences between them as printed and as here written.

The initial stanza in the book does not bear any relation to the manuscript copy except in the thought, which is the same in the two versions.

Hunt tells us that these ballads were founded on the popular assumption that the good outlaw Robin Hood, "the gentlest of thieves," was of "gentle blood." "It is a very good and very probable assumption," he continues, "considering how the Saxon gentry in his time were robbed of their estates by their Norman tyrants; and it ought never to be more popular than now, when to feel for the suffering of all classes, and endeavour to advance the whole human race, is a mark of the highest education,

that of the Sovereign included. The author adopted the metrical license of the old ballads while writing on this subject, but it was not his object to confine himself to their manner."

In view of the fact that a million dollars or more is now being expended by a prominent cinema actor in the production of a picture founded on this story, I feel that this reprint, embellished by Hunt's autograph copy of more than twenty of the stanzas, will prove of interest to the few for whom this publication is intended.

LUTHER A. BREWER

Cedar Rapids Iowa

July 14 1922

BALLADS OF ROBIN HOOD

(For children)

ROBIN HOOD A CHILD

It was the pleasant season yet,
When the stones at cottage doors
Dry quickly while the roads are wet,
After the silver showers.

The green leaves they look'd greener still,
And the thrush, renewing his tune,
Shook a loud note from his gladsome bill
Into the bright blue noon.

Robin Hood's mother look'd out, and said,
"It were a shame and a sin,
For fear of getting a wet head,
To keep such a day within,
Nor welcome up from his sick bed
Your uncle Gamelyn."

And Robin leap'd for mirth and glee,
And so they quit the door,
And "Mother, I'm your dog," quoth he,
And scamper'd on before.

It was the pleasant time of year
When warm fields back in flower,
And the dust is laid for the traveller
With humps of silver showers;

The green leaves they looked green still;
And the thrush, wearing his tune,
Shook a loud note from his glad one bill
Into the bright blue room.

x

Robin was a gentle boy,
 And therewithal as bold;
 To say he was his mother's joy,
 It were a phrase too cold.

His hair upon his thoughtful brow
 Came smoothly clipp'd and sleek,
 But ran into a curl somehow,
 Beside his merrier cheek.

Great love to him his uncle, too,
 The noble Gamelyn bare,
 And often said, as his mother knew,
 That he should be his heir.

Gamelyn's eyes, now getting dim,
 Would twinkle at his sight,
 And his ruddy wrinkles laugh at him
 Between his locks so white:

For Robin already let him see
 He should beat his playmates all
 At wrestling, and running, and archery,
 For he cared not for a fall.

Now and then his gall arose,
 And into a rage he flew;
 But 'twas only at such as Tom Harden's blows,
 Who, when he had given a bloody nose,
 Used to mimic the cock when he crows;
 Otherwise Rob laugh'd too.

Tharist he us ~~at~~ ^{of} many ~~ways~~,
 And could set the old ~~ways~~ ^{letting} ~~things~~ ^{things};
 If his backe esled about the wize,
 'Wos "If you please, Sir, Robin."

And yet if ~~the old men~~ ^{the old men} ~~wished~~ ^{wished} to wize,
 He'd woe, visit at his knee,
 And be the friend of frey-ey'd boys;
 And not a word spake he.

So chere he & his mother come
 To home old Somegha Helle,
 'Wos nothing there but sport & game,
 And holiday folks all;
 Reserants were we & home,
 Thingh they let the physic fell.

And now the travellers thorn the woad,
 And now they ~~are~~ ^{like} the woads;
 And that it is, - the old shade,
 With all its ~~new~~ ^{beauty} looks.

Merriest he was of merry boys,
 And would set the old helmets bobbing;
 If his uncle ask'd about the noise,
 'Twas "If you please, sir, Robin."

And yet if the old man wish'd no noise,
 He'd come and sit at his knee,
 And be the gravest of grave-eyed boys,
 And not a word spoke he.

So whenever he and his mother came
 To brave old Shere Wood Hall,
 'Twas nothing there but sport and game,
 And holiday folks all:
 The servants never were to blame,
 Though they let the pasty fall.

And now the travellers turn the road,
 And now they hear the rooks;
 And there it is, — the old abode,
 With all its hearty looks.

Robin laugh'd, and the lady too,
 And they look'd at one another;
 Says Robin, "I'll knock as I'm used to do
 At uncle's window, mother."

And so he pick'd up some pebbles and ran,
 And jumping higher and higher,
 He reach'd the windows with *tan a ran tan*,

Robin crept, ^{the led,} & his mother too,
 And they looked at one another;
 Says Robin, "He knowd, as I'm told to do
 At uncle's wind ow, nother."

And so he picked up some pebbles & ran,
 And jumping higher & higher
 He reached the window with tan a ran tan,
 And instead of the kind old white-haired man,
 There looked out a fat friar

"How now," said the fat friar angrily,
 "What is this knocking so wild?"
 But when he saw young Robin's eye,
 He said, "Go now, my child"

"Go now to the left, & I'll tell you all."
 He'll tell us all: thought Robin:
 And his mother it he went quietly,
 Though her heart was set a throbbing.

And instead of the kind old white-hair'd man,
There look'd out a fat friar.

"How now," said the fat friar angrily,
"What is this knocking so wild?"

But when he saw young Robin's eye,
He said, "Go round, my child.

"Go round to the hall, and I'll tell you all."

"He'll tell us all!" thought Robin;
And his mother and he went quietly,
Though her heart was set a throbbing.

The friar stood in the inner door,
And tenderly said, "I fear
You know not the good squire's no more,
Even Gamelyn Shere.

"Gamelyn of Shere Wood is dead,
He changed but yesternight:"
"Now make us way," the lady said,
"To see that doleful sight."

"Good old Gamelyn Shere is dead,
And has made us his holy heirs:"
The lady stay'd not for all he said,
But went weeping up the stairs.

Robin and she went hand in hand,
Weeping all the way,

The pice stood in the inner door
 And under said "I fear,
 You know not the good squier is no more,
^{Good} ~~Good~~ Semelha de bre.

"Semelha de bre is dead,
 He charged but yester night -"
 "How made he way," the Pedy said,
 "Unto that doleful sight."

^{Good} Semelha de bre is dead
 And has left made in his holy lair -"
 The lady stayed not for ~~what~~ ^{what} he he said,
 But went weeping up the stairs.

Robin & the wret herd in hand
 Keeping all the way,
 Untill they came there the lord of the land
 Thrust in his cold bed lay. }

Until they came where the lord of that land
Dumb in his cold bed lay.

His hand she took, and saw his dead look,
With the lids over each eye-ball;
And Robin and she wept as plenteously,
As though he had left them all.

“I will return, Sir Abbot of Vere,
I will return, as is meet,
And see my honour’d brother dear
Laid in his winding sheet.

“And I will stay, for to go were a sin,
For all a woman’s tears,
And see the noble Gamelyn
Laid equal with the Veres.”

The lady went with a sick heart out
Into the fresh air,
And told her Robin all about
The abbot whom he saw there:

And how his uncle must have been
Disturb’d in his failing sense,
To leave his wealth to these artful men,
At her’s and Robin’s expense.

Sad was the stately day for all
But the Vere Abbey friars,

His hand she took, & she saw his dead look
 With the lids over each eye-ball;
 And ~~had~~ ^{Robin} the child & she left so plentifully,
 As though he had left them all:

"I will return, ~~then~~ ^{his} shot of base,
 I will return, as is meet,
 And see my honoured brother dear
 Dropped in his winding sheet.

And I will stay, ^{but go see a sin,} ~~and he will stay,~~
 For all a woman's tears,
 And see the noble Semelyn
 Laid low with the de bees."

But the lady went with a sick heart out
 To put ^{the} ~~the~~ for haming air,
 And ~~then~~ ^{she} told her Robin she should
 She ~~will~~ ^{will} not show he saw there;

When the coffin was stript of its hiding pall,
Amidst the hushing choirs.

Sad was its going down into the dust,
And the thought of the face departed;
The lady shook at them, as shake we must,
And Robin he felt strange-hearted.

That self-same evening, nevertheless,
They return'd to Locksley town,
The lady in a sore distress,
And Robin looking down.

No word he spoke, no note he took
Of bird, or beast, or aught,
Till she ask'd him with a woful look
What made him so full of thought.

"I was thinking, mother," said little Robin,
And with his own voice so true
He spoke right out, "That if I was a king,
Or if I was a man, which is the next thing,
I'd see what those friars do.

"I wouldn't let 'em be counted friars,
If they did as these have done,
But make 'em fight, for rogues and liars;
I'd make 'em fight, to see which was right,
Them, or the mother's son."

His mother stoop'd with a tear of joy,
And she kiss'd him again and again,

In the
 They went, I think, I Robin
 Robin looked on with look
 Long steps by his mother's side
 Till she turned ~~at him with a sad~~ ^{as if he were a sad} ~~and~~ ^{quiet} ~~and~~ ^{look}
 And that made him so thoughtful-eyed.

"I was thinking mother," said little Robin
 And ~~to make as to what to do~~ ^{with his own right hand} ~~so true~~
 "He spoke right out," ^{he} ~~that~~ ^{was} ~~the~~ ^a ~~king,~~
 "I'd see what those pieces do."

His mother stooped ^{and} ~~in~~ ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{his} ~~eyes~~ ^{eyes} of joy,
 And she kissed ~~him~~ ^{his} ~~eyes~~ ^{eyes} open,
 And said "My own little Robin boy,
 There will be a king of men."

And said, "My own little Robin boy,
Thou wilt be a King of Men."

ROBIN HOOD'S FLIGHT

Robin Hood's mother, these ten years now,
Has been gone from her earthly home;
And Robin has paid, he scarce knew how,
A sum for a noble tomb.

The churchyard lies on a woody hill,
But open to sun and air:
It seems as if the heaven still
Were blessing the good bones there.

Often when Robin turn'd that way,
He look'd through a sweet thin tear;
But he look'd in a different manner, they say,
Towards the Abbey of Vere.

Custom had made him not care for wealth,
Sincere was his mirth at pride;
He had youth, and strength, and health,
And enough for one beside.

But he thought of his gentle mother's cheek,
How it faded and sunk away,
And how she used to grow more weak
And weary every day:

And how, when trying a hymn, her voice
At evening would expire,

How unlike it was the arrogant noise
Of the hard throats in the choir:

And Robin thought too of the poor,
How they toil'd without their share,
And how the alms at the abbey door
But kept them as they were:

And he thought him then of the friars again,
Who rode jingling up and down,
With their trappings and things as fine as the King's,
Though they wore but a shaven crown.

And then of the king bold Robin he thought,
And the homes for his sports undone;
How the poor were turn'd out where his deer were brought
Yet on body and soul what agonies wrought,
If starving, they killed but one.

And in angry mood, as Robin thus stood,
Digging his bow in the ground,
He was aware in old Shere Wood,
Of a huckster who look'd around.

"And what is Will doing?" said Robin then,
"That he looks so fearful and wan?"
"Oh my dear master that should have been,
I am a weary man.

"A weary man," said Will Nokes, "am I
For unless I pilfer this wood



To sell to the fletchers, for want I shall die
Here in this forest so good.

"Here in this forest where I have been
So happy and so stout,
And like a palfry on the green,
Have carried yourself about."

"And why, Will Nokes, not come to me?
Why not to Robin, Will?
For I remember thy love and thy glee,
And the scar that marks thee still;

"And not a soul of my uncle's men
To such a pass should come,
While Robin can find in his pocket or bin
A penny or a crumb.

"Stay thee, Will Nokes, man, stay awhile;
And kindle a fire for me."
And into the wood for half a mile,
He has vanish'd instantly.

Robin Hood, with his cheek on fire,
Has drawn his bow so stern,
And a leaping deer, with one leap higher,
Lies motionless in the fern.

Robin, like a proper knight,
As he should have been,



Carv'd a part of the shoulder right,
And bore off a portion clean.

"Oh, what hast thou done, dear master mine,
What hast thou done for me?"

"Roast it, Will, for excepting wine,
Thou shalt feast thee royally."

And Nokes he took and half roasted it,
Blubbering with blinding tears,
And ere he had eaten a second bit,
A trampling came to their ears.

They heard the tramp of a horse's feet,
And they listen'd and kept still,
For Will was feeble, and knelt by the meat;
And Robin he stood by Will.

"Seize him! seize him!" the Abbot cried
With his fat voice through the trees;
Robin a smooth arrow felt and eyed,
And Will jump'd stout with his knees.

Time had made the fat Abbot, I trow,
A fatter and angrier man;
Yet the voice was the same that twelve years ago
Out of the window, to Robin below,
Answer'd the *tan a ran tan*.

"Seize him! seize him!" and now they appear,
The Abbott and foresters three:

"'Twas I," cried Will, "that slew the deer:"
Says Robin, "Now let not a man come near,
Or he's dead as dead can be."

But on they came, and with gullet cleft
The first one met the shaft;
And he fell with a face of all mirth bereft,
That just before had laugh'd.

The others turn'd to that Abbot vain,
But "Seize him!" still he cried,
And as the second man turn'd again,
The second man shriek'd and died.

"Seize him, seize him still, I say,"
Cried the Abbot, in furious chafe,
"Or these dogs will grow so bold some day,
E'en monks will not be safe."

A fatal word! for as he sat,
Urging the sword to cut,
An arrow stuck in his paunch so fat,
As in a leathern butt:

As in a leathern butt of wine,
Or piece of beef so round,
Stuck that arrow, strong and fine;
Sharp had it been ground.

I know not what the Abbot, alack!
Thought when that was done;

But there tumbled from the horse's back
A matter of twenty stone.

"Truly," said Robin without fear,
Smiling there as he stood,
"Never was slain so fat a deer
In good old Gamelyn's wood."

"Pardon, pardon, Sir Robin stout,"
Said he that stood apart,
"As soon as I knew thee, I wish'd thee out
Of the forest with all my heart.

"And I pray thee let me follow thee
Anywhere under the sky,
For thou wilt never stay here with me,
Nor without thee can I."

Robin smiled, and suddenly fell
Into a little thought;
And then into a leafy dell
The three slain men they brought.

Ankle deep in leaves so red,
Which autumn there had cast,
When going to her winter bed
She had undrest her last.

And there in a hollow, side by side,
They buried them under the treen;

The Abbot's belly, for all its pride,
Made not the grave be seen.

Robin Hood, and the forester,
And Nokes the happy Will,
Struck off among the green leaves there
Up a pathless hill;

And Robin caught a sudden sight
Of merry sweet Locksley town,
Reddening in the sunset bright;
And the gentle tears came down.

Robin look'd at the town and land,
And the churchyard where it lay;
And loving Will he kiss'd his hand,
And turn'd his head away.

Then Robin turn'd with a grasp of Will's,
And clapp'd him on the shoulder,
And said, with one of his pleasant smiles,
"Now show us three men bolder."

And so they took their march away,
As firm as if to fiddle,
To journey that night and all next day,
With Robin Hood in the middle.

ROBIN HOOD AN OUTLAW

Robin Hood is an outlaw bold,
Under the greenwood tree;
Bird, nor stag, nor morning air,
Is more at large than he.

They sent against him twenty men,
Who join'd him laughing-eyed;
They sent against him thirty more,
And they remain'd beside.

All the stoutest of the train
That grew in Gamelyn wood,
Whether they came with these or not,
Are now with Robin Hood.

And not a soul in Locksley town
Would speak him an ill word;
The friars raged; but no man's tongue,
Nor even feature stirred;

Except among a very few,
Who dined in the Abbey halls;
And then with a sigh bold Robin knew
His true friends from his false.

There was Roger the monk, that used to make
All monkery his glee;
And Midge, on whom Robin had never turn'd
His face but tenderly;

With one or two, they say, besides —
Lord! that in this life's dream
Men should abandon one true thing,
That would abide with them.

We cannot bid our strength remain,
Our cheeks continue round;
We cannot say to an aged back,
Stoop not towards the ground:

We cannot bid our dim eyes see
Things as bright as ever,
Nor tell our friends, though friends from youth,
That they'll forsake us never:

But we can say, *I* never will,
False world, be false for thee;
And, oh Sound Truth and Old Regard
Nothing shall part us three.

HOW ROBIN AND HIS OUTLAWS LIVED IN THE WOODS

Robin and his merry men
Liv'd just like the birds;
They had almost as many tracks as thoughts,
And whistles and songs as words.

All the morning they were wont
To fly their gray-goose quills
At butts, or trees, or wands and twigs,
Till theirs was the skill of skills.

With swords, too, they played lustily,
And at quarter-staff;
Buffets oft their forfeits were,
Fit to twirl a calf.

Friends who join'd the sport were bound
Those hazards to endure;
But foes were lucky to carry away
What took a year to cure.

The horn was then their dinner-bell;
When, like princes of the wood,
Under the state of summer trees,
Pure venison was their food.

Pure venison and good ale or wine,
Except when luck was chuff;
Or grant 'twas Adam's ale; what then?
Their blood was wine enough.

And story then, and jest, and song,
And Harry's harp went round;
And sometimes they'd get up and dance,
For pleasure of the sound.

Tingle, tangle! said the harp,
As they footed in and out:
Good Lord! was ever seen a dance
At once so light and stout?

A pleasant sight, especially
If Margery was there,
Or little Ciss, or laughing Bess,
That tired out six pair.

Or any other merry lass
From the neighbouring villages,
Who came with milk and eggs, or fruit,
A singing through the trees.

Only they say the men were given
Too often to take wives,
And then, 'twixt forest and a shop,
Lead strange half-honest lives.

But all the country round about
Was fond of Robin Hood,
With whom they got a share of more
Than fagots from the wood.

Nor ever would he suffer harm,
To woman, above all;
No plunder, were she ne'er so great,
No fright to great or small;

No, — not a single kiss unliked,
Nor one look-saddening clip;
Accurst be he, said Robin Hood,
Makes pale a woman's lip.

And then, oh then, Maid Marian came
From her proud brother's hall,
With a world of love and tears,
And smiles behind them all.

They built her bowers in forests three,
To flit from one to t'other,
And Robin and she reign'd as pleasant to all,
As faithful to one another.

Only upon the Normans proud,
And on their unjust store,
He'd lay his fines of equity
For his merry men and the poor.

And special was his joy, no doubt,
(Which made the dish to curse,)
To light upon a good fat friar,
And carve him of his purse.

A monk to him was a toad in the hole,
And a priest was a pig in grain,
But a bishop was a baron of beef,
To cut and come again.

Says Robin to the poor who came
To ask of him relief,
You do but get your goods again
That were altered by the thief.

See here now is a plump new coin,
And here's a lawyer's cloak,
And here's the horse the bishop rode,
When suddenly he woke.

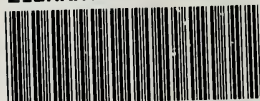
Well, ploughman, there's a sheaf of yours
Turn'd to yellow gold:
And, miller, there's your last year's rent,
'Twill wrap thee from the cold.

And you there, Wat of Herefordshire,
Who such a way have come,
Get upon your land-tax, man,
And ride it merrily home.

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